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Chinese Ring Leader Found Guilty Of Peddling New Mexico Driver's Licenses To Out-Of-State Illegal Immigrants

SANTA FE – An illegal Chinese immigrant who helped obtain New Mexico driver's licenses for several other illegal immigrants from her country by using fraudulent residential documents was convicted today of conspiracy.

A Santa Fe jury on Wednesday convicted Xian Liu Yue, 51, on one count of conspiracy for helping illegal immigrants from China living in New York obtain New Mexico driver's licenses by using fraudulent residential documents.

"We're pleased with this verdict that goes on to prove once again that New Mexico has become a magnet for illegal immigrants and human traffickers who are coming to our state for the sole purpose of obtaining our driver's licenses," said Demesia Padilla, Secretary for the Taxation and Revenue Department. "With New Mexico being only one of two states to issue driver's licenses to illegal immigrants, these criminal schemes will continue to operate until we repeal this misguided law."

Liu Yue and her sister rented multiple apartments simultaneously in the greater Albuquerque area for creating residential documents for her clients, who were living in New York. She reportedly charged between \$500 and \$1,000 from each of her clients to obtain a New Mexico driver's license. The Motor Vehicle Division cancelled 11 known licenses issued to illegal Chinese nationals from New York in this scheme.

Liu Yue was arrested last October along with a client, Shunxian Feng, for trying to obtain a driver's license for Feng at Santa Fe MVD office. Liu Yue was indicted on conspiracy and forgery charges while Feng was indicted on one count of forgery last December. Feng testified against Liu Yue in the trial that began Monday before District Judge Michael Vigil in Santa Fe. Liu Yue's sister escaped and her whereabouts are not known.

Liu Yue is facing a maximum of 18 months in prison when she's scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Vigil on Wednesday, Oct. 5, 2011. She was taken into custody after the verdict because she's considered a flight risk.

Prior Driver License Schemes:

- **In October 2010**, State Police arrested two Chinese nationals accused of being part of an illegal driver's license scheme at an MVD office in Santa Fe. Shunxian Feng, 33, flew in from China for the sole purpose of getting a driver's license. Workers at MVD became suspicious after seeing Feng with Shu Juan Liu, whom workers had noticed at MVD several times. Shu Juan Liu fled, but Feng and Yue Xian Liu, 50, were arrested and charged with conspiracy and forging a fictitious license.
- **In September 2010**, State Police arrested a Costa Rican national- Adolfo J. Mora-Granados, 23 – in Albuquerque for his suspected role in helping four illegal immigrants obtain driver's licenses. He is accused of using fake lease agreements to get the immigrants licenses. He was charged with four counts of conspiracy and six counts of forgery.
- **In September 2010**, State Police arrested a Brazilian man - Christian Sobral - who tried getting two other Brazilians licenses in Albuquerque. Sobral was paid \$3,000 to fly in the Brazilians and help them get licenses. He was charged with two counts of conspiracy to commit a felony.
- **In July 2010**, a 32-year-old Illinois man was arrested after helping two undocumented Polish immigrants who live in Illinois get licenses in Albuquerque. Jaroslaw Kowalczyk, who pleaded guilty in federal court for transporting illegal immigrants, charged the immigrants \$1,000 each to drive them to New Mexico and get them forged documents.
- **March 2011**, a Santa Fe grand jury indicted four illegal foreign nationals of East Indian descent from Chicago, including the ring leader who is accused of charging \$6,000 per individual to fraudulently obtain a New Mexico driver's license. The ring leader Siraj A. "Sunny" Poonawala, 55. The same grand jury a week before also indicted his clients Sanjay Kumar G. Patel, 24; Bhavesh Kumar M. Prajapati, 27; and Hitesh Kumar A. Patel, 24; on charges of conspiracy and altered, forged or fictitious license.
- **August 2011**, An Albuquerque grand jury indicted Ana Hernandez on over 300 counts of felony charges for creating fake residency documents so illegal immigrants could obtain New Mexico drivers' licenses. She helped 43 illegal immigrants of Mexican descent obtain New Mexico driver's licenses.
- **August 2011**, Three leaders of a Chinese crime ring that helped secure New Mexico driver's licenses to over 60 illegal immigrants from out of state by using fraudulent documents are facing over 1,150 counts of felony charges. An Albuquerque grand jury today returned indictments against Gordon Leong, Tin Cheung and Alex Cheung on 386 counts each on charges of fraud, forgery, conspiracy; making false affidavit perjury; and altered, forged or fictitious license.
- **August 2011**, A federal grand jury in Albuquerque indicted three men – Joshua Silva, Lukasz Koslik and Hai Gan – on charges of bringing illegal immigrants to New Mexico from other states to help them obtain New Mexico driver's license.

